Take-Home Essay Exam (150 Points)

Directions

People in America talk about current events—in person, over the phone, and on social media. Political discussion is one of the blessings of living in a democracy, allowing us to share our political emotions with one another and gain insights as we work together to understand, analyze, and react to our political system and political news (Student Learning Goals #3 and #5 from the syllabus).[1] Disagreements are inevitable in a free society, but God invites us to respond to each other with a Christian worldview motivated by God-empowered respect and thoughtfulness.

Because of the eternal, practical, and academic importance of political discussion, unit 1 of our class explores the following questions: How should we speak with one another about politics? What should be the content, tone, and motivation of our political messages? We have contemplated these questions by reading Dr. Amy E. Black's book *Honoring God in Red or Blue: Approaching Politics with Humility, Grace, and Reason*. All the political discussion assignments in our class—including the take-home essay exam—flow from this book.

The paper will be at least 2 full double-spaced pages and will be worth 150 points, or 15% of the overall course grade. (It is perfectly fine to exceed 2 pages.) Your paper must answer **each** of the following questions:

1. In your view, how should Christian's honor God in politics? – Yes, I think Christian's should honor God in politics. Think following God's direction in fluence regardless of treating people with respect, agreeing to disagree with there being a problem, and everything else under the sun is the only way to go about things.

2. How do your opinions on this question compare and/or contrast with Dr. Black's? Also, what would happen in politics (e.g., level of political civility and effectiveness of government) if more Christians genuinely sought to honor God? Please explain your responses.
3. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Dr. Black's book? Please explain your views and identify **at least one** strength and **at least one** weakness.
4. How did the book influence you personally? Here are some application questions to consider (you are **not** required to answer the specific questions that follow): Did the book challenge you? Did it motivate you to become more interested in politics or informed about current

[1] Conversing about non-political topics also generates fresh ideas and promotes personal well-being. For more, see Bernard Rimé. 2009. "Emotion Elicits the Social Sharing of Emotion: Theory and Empirical Review." *Emotion Review* 1(January): 60–85.

events? Did it affect how you view the new Trump administration? If so, how?

Some additional guidelines: Unlike take-home essay exam 2, the first essay exam in PO 101 is **individual**. Please work on your own, avoiding academic integrity violations (including any text re-write artificial intelligence options from your word processor). See the syllabus on Brightspace for details about the academic integrity policy for our class. Finally, your paper should have 12-point font (Times New Roman) and 1-inch margins.

First Draft (25 Points)

The first draft is due on **Saturday, February 15, at 11:59 p.m.**, via the Assignments tab on Brightspace. The paper **will** be accepted late until the start of class on Monday, but there will be a **5-point deduction**. Afterward, the score for the first draft will be **0 points**—12.5 points if the final draft is submitted.

To assist you with the first draft, feel free to reach out to me with **questions**. You can e-mail me (Cawvey@erskine.edu) or speak with me before or after class or during **office hours**: Erskine Building-317, Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00–4:30 p.m. and by appointment.

You will receive **full credit** for the first draft if it is at least 2 full pages with 12-point font and 1-inch margins and includes at least some evaluation. Otherwise, your score for the first draft will be 20 points.

Peer Review (Participation Opportunity)

To meet Student Learning Goal #4 on writing skills (please see the syllabus), you will exchange feedback with one of your peers, using a form distributed in class on **February 17** (along with your peer's paper). The questions on this form can be found at the end of this document (page 5), in Appendix A. Please read your fellow student's paper, answer all the questions on the form, and submit the form for a participation opportunity. If students attend class on February 17 but have not submitted a first draft, an alternative paper for review will be provided to encourage the development of writing skills.

Final Draft (125 Points)

Finally, you will submit the final draft (125 points) via the Assignments tab on Brightspace by **Tuesday, February 18, at 11:59 p.m.** The paper will be accepted late, with a deduction of 10% for 48 hours late and 20% thereafter.
Other deductions for the final draft will be as follows:

- -15 points if the paper does not reach the second page (title page not included)
- -7.5 points if the paper reaches the second page but does not cover 2 full pages (title page not included)
- -15 points for not answering all the evaluation questions:
    - In your view, how should Christians honor God in politics? How do your opinions on this question compare and/or contrast with Dr. Black's? Also, what would happen in politics (e.g., level of political civility and effectiveness of government) if more Christians genuinely sought to honor God? Please explain your responses.
    - What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of Dr. Black's book? Please explain your views and identify **at least one** strength and **at least one** weakness.
    - How did the book influence you personally? Here are some application questions to consider (you are **not** required to answer the specific questions that follow): Did the book challenge you? Did it motivate you to become more interested in politics or informed about current events? Did it affect how you view the new Trump administration? If so, how?
- -5 points for other errors in quotations, accuracy, depth, logical consistency, or citations
    - *Quotations*. The paper should include 0 quotes or 1 quote of 50 words or fewer. The paper will receive a deduction if more than 1 quote is used or if the quote contains more than 50 words. **Please demonstrate your understanding of the material by summarizing and evaluating Dr. Black's book in your own words.**
    - *Accuracy*. Please ensure that your paper is accurate, consistent with the facts of American politics and the content of Dr. Black's book. There will be a deduction for each error in accuracy.
    - *Depth*. Your paper should state not just *what* you think but also *how* and *why* you answered as you did. In other words, explain yourself, providing evidence and logical reasoning for your statements. Moreover, if an example would support your argument or if an example is implied by your response, please provide the example. There will be a deduction for each error in depth.
    - *Logical consistency*. Your argument should be strong and logically consistent. There will be a deduction for each error in logical consistency. Please avoid the following:
        - Unexplained logic (e.g., "this is unwise"; put another way, unexplained logic would lack depth, as discussed above)
        - Incomplete logic (e.g., "this is wise because [insert your erred political ideology] supports wise decisions"; instead,

discuss the wisdom of the position based on its inherent morality or its net benefit to society)
        - Disorganized statements (e.g., focusing on one topic in your paper and then introducing a largely or entirely unrelated matter)
    - *Citations*. Please include a reference for all sources that you consulted, including Dr. Black's book. In the text, cite the page numbers or chapters for any quotes. I am indifferent to the format of your citation list (e.g., APA, APSA, MLA, or Chicago).

Student Learning Goals

The paper is consistent with the following Student Learning Goals from our syllabus:

- Explain how citizens, civil society, and governmental institutions operate in the American political system, both in contemporary times and historically (communication and critical thinking).
- Analyze local, national, and global issues (critical thinking and global awareness).
- Engage in academic writing, with a focus on American government (communication and critical thinking).
- Engage in civil discussion about current events in U.S. politics (ethics/morals).